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STUDENT POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE 13TH MALAYSIAN GENERAL ELECTION : A CASE STUDY AMONG STUDENTS OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN KLANG VALLEY

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Abstract

Student and politic, this topic has been much debated for some time and there are many different views and thoughts on whether student should be allowed to take part in politics or not. Student political involvement is related with Student Movement. Student Movement has played a crucial role in many major social and political transformations. The purpose of this study is to analyze the student political involvement in the 13th Malaysian General Election. The development of student activism in Malaysia political landscape after the amendment of Universities and College Universities Act 1971. In addition, the researcher goal is to identify the factors contributing to student involvement in politics and general election. And how student political involvement gives impact to the social development in Malaysia. Moreover, how these involvement of students can affect the political future and social issues in the short term and long-term perspectives.

Keywords: *student, political involvement, The 13th Malaysian General Election, student movement, public university*

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle once described the study of politics as the "Master Science."¹ He stated that politic is studying the interactions of human beings within the confines of political life encompassed the study of practically everything. Politic covers all aspect of life the political, economic, and cultural.

According to Buhlmann et. al (2008), democracy is that the people have the right to determine who govern them. Three fundamental principles highlighted by Buhlmann are freedom, equality, and control. Word democracy is "a system of government by which political sovereignty is retained by the people and exercised directly by the citizens². Based on the definition, Democracy is inclusive and accessible and from the people to the people.

Democracy simply cannot work without mass political involvement or participation. (Larry 2008). The word democracy derives from the two Greek words ;demos (The People) and Kratos (To Rule). (Steven L. Taylor 2012). Webster's Dictionary defines democracy as ' a government by the people either directly or through elected representatives rule by the ruled'. Basically , democracies mean political powers in the hands of the people. There are many forms of political involvement or participation such as voting in election, campaign &

1) 30-Second Politics by Steve L. Taylor

2) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/democracy>

election activities, seeking information about political knowledge, protest, civil disobedience and violence. (Process of American Democracy).

Student political involvement and democracy are related with Student Movement. Student Movement has played a crucial role in many major social and political transformations. Beside that student movement around the part of world has been part of various movements to promote democracy and human rights³. According to the article 'The Philippine Student Movement' written by Maricris Valte, the student movement is one radical movement that has perhaps captured the imagination of most youth activist. The most characterized by the highest degree of commitment, idealism, and identification with the less privileged classes. Examples where youth and students had played a significant role in effecting social transformation, Nikolai Bukhavin of the Russian Bolshevik Party and Fidel Castro of Cuba where student and youth leader at the time when they got involved in the great social upheavals that changed the course of their respective countries.

History of student movement around the world started at the University California at Berkeley in 1964 where the student defended their rights to participate in politics and in particular, to protest against the Vietnam War and few years later The Berkeley Model was copied at Berlin University and it birth of student revolutionaries.⁴ Other historical event such as The Korean War in 1950, The French Revolution of 1968, Japan Student Movement and The Philippine Student Movement. All these are the rise of international student movement.

Political involvement is used to refer to both political participation and political Engagement. According to Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984), that defines involvement as, "the investment of physical and psychological energy." Both political participation (physical energy) and political engagement (psychological energy) are possible outcomes of the student experience. Diemer (2012) referred to political participation as an 'engagement' with traditional mechanism in the political system, such as voting in elections and joining political organization. Katherine (2008) political involvement can take the form of electoral and campaign behaviors, political voice activities and attentiveness to current issues and political view.

Today, students more interested in political issues and some of them actively participation in politics and refer to Young (2004), students are more positive attitudes about politics than in the past. Politically engaged youth are likely to continue political participation as adults (Flanagan 2009, P Latzar 2002, Wattenberg (2008). Based on studies by Flanagan (2009) and Wattenberg (2008) increasing political engagement among college students may lay the groundwork for increase in the size of the pool of active adult citizens and may shape future trends in American political participation. Students involvement in politic shown that the students nowadays are more aware of democracy and human rights.

Students in the higher learning institution are a group of educated youth. As a group of educated youth their political involvement will play important role to change the Malaysia's political scenarios. Hence, this study is to analyze the student political involvement in 13th General Election. The development of student activism in Malaysia political landscape after the amendment of Universities and College Universities Act 1971. In addition, the researcher goal is to identify the factors contributing to student involvement in politics and general election. And how student political involvement gives impact to the social development in Malaysia. Moreover, how these involvement of students can affect the political future and social issues in the short term and long-term perspectives.

THE HISTORY OF STUDENT MOVEMENT/ ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA

The student movement in Malaysia has its beginning in early 1930, teacher trainees from the Sultan Idris training College recognized the Kesatuan Melayu Muda or KMM (Young Malay Union) which opposed British Colonialism and desired independence.⁵ Thus, university students were actively involved in the struggle for independence. In 1949 University Malaya (UM) students formed the first club-Socialist Club and in that year also UM students and journalist joined the anti-colonial movement.

And around began 1967 is regarded as the transition year for the student movement. As students began to raise vital issues relating to the lives of the people. Example in the historic Telok Gong landless squatter struggle, both the University of Malaya Students Union (UMSU) and the University of Malaya Malay Language Society (PBMUM) were directly involved.⁶ The Telok Gong struggle began as a struggle by poor landless peasants to obtain land. Other important issue raised in 1969 The University Malaya Student Union (UMSU) held public rallies before election. Democracy, justice, freedom, better economic policy and national educational policy

3) www.freemalaysiatoday/category/opinion/2012/10/04/power_of_student_activism

4) www.freemalaysiatoday/category/opinion/2012/10/04/power_of_student_activism

5) Information Taken From 'The Student Movement in Malaysia 1967-1974' By Hassan Karim

6) Information Taken From 'The Student Movement in Malaysia 1967-1974' By Hassan Karim

were demanded in their manifesto. UMSU at that time led by Anwar Ibrahim played important role to make Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman step down and UMSU president detained.

Historical event of student movement in Malaysia in year 1971 where a massive demonstration of 200 students was held outside campus to protest against the implementation of the University Act. Student protested within campus in 1971-1973. Due to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union in 1968 was met with widespread international opposition. In 1973, the student of the University of Malaya joined the protest outside the Soviet Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. It was first demonstration by the students outside the campus and it became historic event. The events outside the country contributed to increasing political awareness amongst student. Other international issues, example the revolt of French students against De Gaulle. The event had a big impact on students all over the world. 1971, the oppression of Muslims in Pattani was championed as was the Palestinian issues in 1976. We can conclude events outside the country contributed to increasing political awareness amongst student.

However, existence of University and University College Acts (AUKU OR UCCA) was first implement in 1971 to control and weaken student organization, thus controlling student movement and the growth of political elite. In 1975, a new amendment on the University College Act was introduced and all student organization dissolved. Under Section 15 of the UUCA 1971, university students are not allowed to form an alliance, supports, empathize with, or oppose any political party, labor union or any organization or group without prior permission from the university vice – chancellor.

After 20 years on 17th September 1998, Malaysia Youth & Student Democratic Movement (DEMA) was formed. It consists of a group of students from various universities who were responsible for presenting the effects of globalization on the youth and student movement in Malaysia – DEMA. The arrest of Anwar Ibrahim led to a new wave of student movement. The opposition fervor spilled over onto local campuses as “anti-establishment” students took control of their student representative councils from 1999 to 2004- The Star

However after 40 years, on Oct 31 2011, the Court of Appeal set aside the decision of the High Court, declaring that Section 15 (5) of the UCCA as unconstitutional as it violated Article 10 of the Federal Constitution. The government amends of Section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UCCA) 1971, to allow students aged 21 and above to be involved in politics.

THE 13TH MALAYSIAN GENERAL ELECTION

Malaysia's 13th General Election was held on 5th May 2013. According to recent statistic, in the 13th Malaysian General Election 30% of the 13.3 million registered voters were young voters. Also according to Election Commission, there are 450,000 people turning 21 each year. In 2013 the Election Commission has registered 2.4 million new voters. From the statistic it showed increased trend of youth participation in election process. After the government amends of the Section 15 of the Universities and University College Act (UCCA) 1971, to allow students aged 21 and above to be involved in politics. So this study is important to analyze the trend of student political involvement in the 13th Malaysian General Election and to identify factor contributing to it and to answer the emergence of student activist among student of public universities in Malaysia. (<http://hornbillunleashed.wordpress.com/2013>)

METHODOLOGY

This study will uses cross- sectional survey of the respondent in order to to answer a research questions. Sources of data such as primary data (questionnaires and interview) and secondary data. Questionnaires will personally self-administered and using interval scale- five point likert scale. For the interview both structured and unstructured such as opened ended questions, has a list of questions to be asked to the respondents and will be conducted face to face. Interview with student activist. Sample size is 500. Sampling technique will uses purposive sampling to obtain info from specific targets groups. This target group is refer to students in the public university in Klang Valley, 21 years old and above and eligible / potential voters. Public University in Klang Valley such as Universiti Teknologi Mara (UITM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIA) and Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM).

SIGNIFICANT OF STUDY

This study hope to provide a deeper understanding of student political involvement in 13th Malaysian General Election and what is a key factor that contributing to the student political involvement in current

Malaysia political scenerio and in election process. Not only that it will analysis of the significance of recent trends towards increased participation in politics.

CONCLUSION

Young people are the future of democracy. As a youth and a future leader student political involvement play important role to the country. Students as political actors and play their own roles and idealism in political transformation. This because politics cover all aspect of politics, economic and social. Looking at the development of student activism in the country from 1930 until now and it has changed the country political climate. Example issue of student activist Adam Adli has been suspended from university for three semesters because of his offence, pulling down a picture of Prime Minister during a student protest march in 2011. Other issue four student of University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) are charged under AUKU for observing the Hulu Selangor by –election.

These issues got attention from both government and society. After the Court of Appeal set aside the decision of the High Court, declaring that Section 15 (5) of the UCCA as unconstitutional as it violated Article 10 of the Federal Constitution. The government amends of Section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UCCA) 1971, to allow students aged 21 and above to be involved in politics. However, some restriction still imposed to ensure university and college as intellectual institution not influenced by any political ideologies.

In the context of Malaysia scenerio these student activists have emerged in the last few years. Student activist such as Adam Adli, Safwan Anang, (K. S) Bawani and other student activists participate or event mount protest to speak up against various issues. There are radical and vocal to raise the national awareness. On December 17, 2012 about 100 undergraduates marched to UMNO's headquarters. Up to 17 were arrested, and several were beaten.⁷

Refer to the article by Anthony Kuhn ' In Malaysia , Student Challenges Limits on Politics' his mention about Adam Adli is one of these student activist , and is becoming a prominent political figure as he fights to abolish a 40-year-old law that bars students from participating in politics. Adam as student activist slams the act as an attempt to stifle free speech and impose conformity on students.

Other issues raised after the amenment of UCCA and the 13th Malaysian General Election such as student activist have continued to be arrested and brought to court for joining in rallies and protest for electoral reform. Two student activists in July 2013 have been charged with breaching The Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) in relation to PR's final " Black 505" rallies to protest election results.

Student and politics is still an assertion subject to debate. So this research hope to provide answer to recent scenerio of Malaysia's political landscape. This because youth or students nowadays what we called as ' Gen Y' are more independent, critical thinking, vocal, radical sometimes and has their own idealism and as future leader to the country. History also proved that student movement as a crucial role in many major social and political transformations.

According to Analyst Ibrahim Suffian of the Merdeka Center said that there is every chance that today's activist could be the main political stage in 10 years.(What Drives These Young Malay Political Activists, 2013).

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